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Letter dated 9 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by His Excellency Mr. Vilayat Guliyev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the 10th meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, held at Porto, Portugal, on 7 December 2002.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex urgently circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 22 (l) "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe" and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar T. **Aliyev**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 9 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan at the 10th meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, held at Porto, Portugal, on 7 December 2002

My country has subscribed to the statement made yesterday by the distinguished Minister of Ukraine on behalf of the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) group. Speaking in my national capacity, I join the previous speakers in extending appreciation to the outgoing Chairman-in-Office, Minister Martins da Cruz, and welcoming our new Chairman, Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, and wish him every success in implementation of numerous tasks our organization is facing.

At the very outset, I would like to reconfirm our conviction that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has further to play its role in building a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture as the only all-inclusive pan-European institution. We have no reasons to be complacent or over-optimistic when it comes to practical realization of the potential of OSCE and its real effectiveness in coping with the complex challenges being encountered in the area of European security.

Regrettably, 2002 has become another wasted year in terms of rectifying serious deficiencies in the substance and methods of work at OSCE. The organization has not been successful and consistent in achieving implementation of its norms and principles. The most fundamental principles that European security builds upon, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, have yet to be safeguarded throughout the whole OSCE region. This is crucially important, especially with regard to the settlement of the decade-long conflicts within its area. Lack of consistency in upholding OSCE values has nothing in common with the so-called flexibility of OSCE. How many more years are we going to tolerate this situation?

A selective approach in addressing similar problems in a number of regions continues to dominate OSCE. While topics related to human rights rightfully take a prominent place in the OSCE agenda, the participating States have hardly displayed the political will to look into the problems of millions of refugees in the OSCE region. Some parts of the OSCE region account for a greater part of the organization's attention and resources, while the others are not yet at the forefront of the OSCE agenda. Unless OSCE becomes of relevance to all of its participating States, the organization will gradually lose political support of its members.

There is no doubt that terrorism is one of the main threats to international and regional peace and security. It represents a grave challenge to the most fundamental human rights, endangering human lives and infringing upon human dignity. Terrorist acts have a direct negative impact on the stability and sustainable development of States and regions.

The tragic events of 11 September 2001 have once again clearly highlighted the urgent need to unite the efforts of the international community in combating

terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Ho double standards should be tolerated in addressing the various dimensions of this challenge.

In pursuing a goal of eradication of terrorism, one has to address its root causes, and to define its links with organized crime and its sources of financing. The factors causing terrorism and lawlessness, such as aggressive nationalism, violent extremism and armed separatism, should be dealt with by the international community in an effective and consistent manner. Serious attention needs to be paid to a complexity of risks and threats emanating from the territories controlled by separatists and turned into zones of all kinds of criminal activity, including arms smuggling, trafficking of drugs, trafficking in human beings and money-laundering.

The ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan threatens the security not only of my country but of the entire region and of Europe as a whole. There is no room for half-measures and a wait-and-see policy. The deteriorating situation urges principled approaches and calls for immediate action by the international community, including the Security Council. The early settlement of the conflict must finally become the major priority for OSCE, and we expect a contribution to be made in this regard by the incoming Netherlands Chairmanship.

Although since 1992 the Minsk process has not yielded tangible results, Azerbaijan still remains committed to the peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of the commonly recognized norms and principles of international law, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the appropriate OSCE documents and decisions.

However, Armenia should have no illusions — Azerbaijan will restore its territorial integrity by all means provided for by the United Nations Charter and international law.

With regard to the statement of the Armenian Minister on 6 December 2002, I would like to make the following observations.

Armenian rhetoric on "peace, cooperation and hand of friendship extended to Azerbaijan" is a cynical attempt to distract attention of the OSCE participating States from the decade-long aggression against my country and violated rights of Azerbaijani refugees. Having seized the Azerbaijani territories by military force, having ethnically cleansed one million Azerbaijanis from Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven Azerbaijani districts around it, having pillaged and burned down hundreds of Azerbaijani towns and villages, having destroyed thousands of Azerbaijani historical and cultural objects and monuments in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia is now resorting to propagandistic tricks in trying to consolidate the results of aggression. Under these circumstances the legitimate right of Azerbaijan under international law to defend itself against aggression is presented by Armenia as "war-mongering".

I would like to mention that Azerbaijan has always been supportive of the concept of regional cooperation at both the multilateral and bilateral levels. My country is a co-founder and active member of such regionally focused initiatives as the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasia Asia (TRACECA) programme, the GUUAM group, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council, the Economic Cooperation Organization and others. We develop fruitful and mutually beneficial multifaceted cooperation with our immediate neighbours — Georgia, the Islamic

Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and Turkey — building upon principles of good neighbourliness and mutual respect.

As regards our cooperation with Armenia, given the de facto state of war and continued occupation of the Azerbaijani territories, only the settlement of the conflict will pave the way to restoration of our cooperation with Armenia. Interruption of all our economic ties with Armenia is a natural consequence of aggressive policy, pursued against my country. We have to face the realities: trenches separating Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers are located deep inside the territory of *my* country, and not Armenia, and they could hardly provide a good incentive for any bilateral endeavours. This has been the case in all other conflict zones so far and we have no reason to believe that the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan might represent any exception in this regard.

In respect to continuous efforts by Armenia to distort the very notion of the principle of self-determination, let me refer the Armenian Minister to the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. The principle of self-determination in international law is applied along with principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders, and is exercised in a peaceful manner. Demands for "independence" in the situation of military occupation by Armenia of the Azerbaijani territories has nothing in common with the principle of self-determination.

As to the Minister's numerous references to the so-called "people of Nagorno-Karabakh" I do not intend to enter into a discussion of whether the notion of "people" can be applied to an Armenian minority living in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Allow me just to recall that the population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region consists of two communities — Azerbaijanis and Armenians. While historically Nagorno-Karabakh has been part of Azerbaijan, including also in the Soviet period, it has never been for a single day a part of Armenia.

The forceful expulsion of all Azerbaijanis from their homes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region has not changed the status of the region under international law as an inseparable part of Azerbaijan, or elevated the status of the Armenian community.

Regarding the ridiculous attempts of Armenia to portray itself as a "defender" of the Minsk group, it is worth mentioning that Armenia has repeatedly blocked the Minsk group's proposals. The Armenian Minister who participated in the OSCE Summit meeting held in Lisbon in 1996 might wish to recall that it was his country that rejected the proposals of the Minsk group supported by the heads of State and Government of all OSCE participating States.

Armenia has long been waging a covert war against the norms and principles of international law. Utter rejection by that country of any reference to principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders in any OSCE document was raised yesterday to a qualitatively new level — the outright call to change international boarders. Defiance of the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act must be finally challenged.